

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION**

Please replace the second paragraph on page 1 (ending on page 3) with the following:

Known examples of methods for producing  $\alpha$ -hydroxy acid from  $\alpha$ -hydroxynitrile using microbes include a production method of lactic acid, glycolic acid and the like using microbes belonging to the genera *Bacillus*, *Bacteridium*, *Micrococcus* and *Brevibacterium* (Japanese ~~Examined~~ Unexamined Patent Application, ~~Second~~ First Publication No. 58-15120 Sho 50-53586), a production method of lactic acid, glycolic acid and 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid using microbes belonging to the genus *Corynebacterium* (Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. 61-56086), a production method of lactic acid, 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid, 2-hydroxy-2-hydroxyphenylpropionic acid and mandelic acid using microbes belonging to the genera *Pseudomonas*, *Arthrobacter*, *Aspergillus*, *Penicillium*, *Cochliobolus* and *Fusarium* (Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. 63-222696), a production method of 2-hydroxy-3,3-dimethyl-4-butyrolactone using microbes belonging to the genera *Arthrobacter*, *Aspergillus*, *Bacillus*, *Bacteridium*, *Brevibacterium*, *Cochlioborus*, *Corynebacterium*, *Micrococcus*, *Nocardia*, *Penicillium*, *Pseudomonas* and *Fusarium* (Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. 64-10996), a production method of 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid using microbes belonging to the genera *Rhodococcus*, *Pseudomonas*, *Arthrobacter* and *Brevibacterium* (Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. 4-40897), a production method of 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyric acid using microbes belonging to the genera *Caseobacter*, *Pseudomonas*, *Alcaligenes*, *Corynebacterium*, *Brevibacterium*, *Nocardia*, *Rhodococcus* and *Arthrobacter* (Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. 4-40898), a production method of  $\alpha$ -hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyric acid using microbes belonging to the genera *Pantoea*, *Micrococcus*, *Bacteridium*, *Bacillus* and the like (Japanese Unexamined Patent Application, First Publication No. 8-173175), and a production method of  $\alpha$ -hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyric acid using *Alcaligenes faecalis* ATCC 8750, *Rhodococcus* sp. HT29-7 or *Gordona terrae* MA-1 (WO96-09403). In the production method of  $\alpha$ -hydroxy acid disclosed in these prior documents, an  $\alpha$ -hydroxy acid ammonium salt is first obtained by hydrolyzing  $\alpha$ -hydroxynitrile with a microbial catalyst, and then

free  $\alpha$ -hydroxy acid is produced from the salt in accordance with ordinary methods such as acid neutralization, ion exchange resin column, electrodialysis or thermal decomposition.